



FEMA

Floating Docks Prevent Damage to Boats During Hurricanes

N. Fort Meyers, FL — Recreational boats moored at traditional docks have a bumpy experience during normal weather conditions, not to mention when a hurricane hits. By design, a traditional wooden or metal dock is stationary while the boat moves back and forth with the water. During severe weather though, the boat can crash into the dock, sustain severe damage, and could even be destroyed. Floating docks may solve this costly problem.

Similar in construction to a raft, floating docks combine lightweight, buoyant materials to create moveable platforms to which boaters can secure their valuable vessels. A floating dock drifts with water currents, but only as allowed by its anchoring system. The waves caused by mooring and launching of boats, for instance, move the dock only slightly—making it very easy to board.

The design of floating docks greatly reduces the problems of traditional ones. Floating docks are tethered in place by a post-tension or whaler cable system. The cables attach to pilings below and allow the dock to ride up or down with the water level. Essentially, a series of pontoons are bounded by long wooden or steel slats on either side, and then anchored to pilings.

The U.S. Coast Guard in Fort Myers, Fla., uses a floating dock during dangerous boating conditions.

“The Coast Guard finds the floating docks a safer bet than the fixed docks at the beach,” said Dave O’Connor, Harbor Master at Legacy Harbour Marina.

Located 17 miles up the Caloosahatchee River, Legacy Harbour Marina has had floating docks since its construction in 2002. There are 131 slips used by recreational boaters. O’Connor attributes the marina’s popularity to the effectiveness of the floating docks. They are able to withstand tidal surges and also serve as a breakwater for the shoreline.

“Hurricanes Charley and Wilma caused only minimal damages to the floating docks, despite the overall serious damage caused by the hurricanes,” he said.

During those storms, damage to the docks was isolated to cracked wooden slats. That allowed the marina to remain open, with no interruption of service.

Pricing is nearly equivalent between floating and fixed docks.



State-wide,
Florida



Quick Facts

Sector:

Private

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

**Mitigation Planning/Disaster Resistant
Universities**

Primary Funding:

Local Sources